

# *Holy Spirit Series Part 5: Praying with the Holy Spirit*

*Opening Text: “But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.” Jude 1:20-21*

## **Definition of Prayer**

*a (1) : an address (such as a petition) to God or a god in word or thought said  
aplayer for the success of the voyage (2) : a set order of words used in praying b : an earnest request or wish. MERRIAM-WEBSTER DICTIONARY.*

I have read many definitions of prayer. **But one of the nicest and briefest descriptions of prayer I have read** comes from Dr. Ralph Martin, in his book *The Fulfillment of All Desire*. Dr. Martin says beautifully, in a way that is succinct and yet comprehensive and inclusive of diverse expression: *Prayer is, at root, simply paying attention to God. Such a wonderful image: paying attention to God.* Imagine that, actually paying attention to God. So simple, yet so often overlooked.

More traditionally I have heard prayer defined as “conversation with God.” True enough, and well attested. But the definition sheds less light since many, while able to grasp the talking part of conversation, are less able to grasp or appreciate the listening part of a conversation. And thus, there can be a lot of emphasis on recited prayers, intercessory prayers, etc., good in themselves and even required, yet, when and how does one listen?

One could theoretically recite long prayers, but in the end pay little attention to God. This is not usually for malicious or prideful motive, but often simply to due the fact that our minds are very weak. And thus the “conversation” definition has pitfalls and limits.

But how different to go to prayer saying, “I am going to go aside now and spend some time paying attention to God. I am going to sit still and listen, while he speaks. I am going to think on his glory, rejoice in his true, and ponder as deeply as I can his presence.”

Paying attention to God can take many forms. Preeminently there is the slow, thoughtful and deliberate reading of Scripture called *lectio divina*. We are not merely reading a text, we are listening to God speak, we are paying attention to what he says. And as we listen, as we pay attention to him, our minds begin to change, and the Mind of Christ becomes our gift.

Another preeminent way of paying attention to God is Eucharistic Adoration. A thoughtful attentive and loving look to the Lord as our thoughts gently move to him and his loving look returns often wordless but powerful presence.

Further, in authentic and approved spiritual reading we pay attention to God in a way that is mediated through his Saints, mystics and other reputable writers and sources. Good, wholesome

and approved spiritual reading presents the Kingdom of God, his Wisdom and vision to us. And in carefully considering holy teaching, we are paying attention to God.

And of course the highest form of paying attention to God is when we attend to him in the Sacred Scripture, experiencing his presence and power, listening to his word proclaimed thoughtfully and reflectively. Attending to his presence on the sacred altar, and receiving him with attentiveness and devotions.

There are countless ways throughout the day where we can take a moment and pay attention to God. Momentary aspirations, a quick thought sent heavenward, a look of love.

## **Praying with the Holy Spirit**

God loves to respond to the prayers of his people. We see him respond to the desire of Adam for a helpmate with Eve, the prayer of Abraham in saving Lot and his family, the prayer of Moses in the salvation of his people, the prayer of Elijah in sending down fire upon an altar, and the cry for a Savior in sending his only son, Jesus. And through the death of Jesus we've been filled with the Holy Spirit, God himself sent as our Helper. Our Helper not only longs to guide us and empower us, but also to help us pray and to pray for us.

***Jude 1:20-21*** says, ***“But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.”*** We've been given the incredible gift of praying with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit who searches the deep things of God desires to help us pray. He desires to reveal God's desires to us in the midst of our circumstances, relationships, and opportunities and longs to help us pray in line with God's will. When we pray in the Spirit we are praying along with the will of God himself. When we pray in the Spirit we are asking God to do the very thing he desires to do. It's crucially important that we as children of God learn how to discern the will of our Father through the Holy Spirit and pray according to that will.

***Matthew 21:22*** says, ***“And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.”*** And ***Romans 10:17*** teaches us, ***“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”*** Scripture tells us to pray in full faith that God will give us what we ask for because faith is always meant to begin with the word of God. Prayer is meant to be as simple as asking God to fill us with the knowledge of his desire and then praying in accordance with that desire in full faith because God will always fulfill his promises.

What's more, when we don't know what to pray we can trust in and lean on the groanings of the Spirit. ***Romans 8:26*** says, ***“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”*** Did you know that the Holy Spirit prays for you? Did you know that he intercedes on your behalf? So great is his love for you that he asks God to help you. So great is his desire

for you to walk in abundant life that he intercedes on your behalf when you don't know how to pray.

Aren't you thankful for the grace of God? In his grace he's blessed you with the Holy Spirit to help you pray and intercedes for you, all because he loves you. You've been given an incredible, powerful gift in praying with the Holy Spirit. Starting today take time to listen to your Helper as you enter into a time of prayer.

God loves to make the Christian life simpler than we often make it out to be. I used to believe that to discover God's will I had to ask God for things and wait to see if life's circumstances panned out in line with those prayers. But God longs to fill us with the knowledge of his will even before you ask so that we can simply pray in full faith and joy in accordance with what he already desires to do. He blesses us with a life of simplicity if we will simply, wholeheartedly follow him. Take time today to search out the will of God for your life and rest in assurance of his faithfulness as you pray.